

2010 SBA Small Business Week National Small Business Development Center Service Excellence and Innovation Center Award

Watertown Small Business Development Center



From left: Antonio Doss, SBA director of Small Business Development Centers, Eric Constance, Watertown SBDC director, Karen Mills, SBA Administrator, and Lawrence Perras, Watertown SBDC business advisor.

The Watertown Small Business Development Center (SBDC) was one of three outstanding resource partners recently recognized during a National Small Business Week award event in Washington, D.C. ‘During national small business week we honor those who stand beside and support small businesses as they create jobs,’ said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. “Because of our resource partners we are able to touch the lives of over a million small businesses each year that are the engine of our nation’s economy.”

The Small Business Development Center Service Excellence and Innovation Center Award honors a SBDC Service Center for providing value to small businesses and advancing program delivery and management through innovation. Since 1986, the Watertown SBDC has a proven record of assisting the small business sector in rural Northern New York grow and create jobs. Located at Jefferson Community College the SBDC brings together the resources of the college and various levels of government to aid small businesses in addressing and resolving organizational, financial, marketing, technical and other business-related issues. Since its inception the Watertown SBDC has assisted 14,646 clients investing \$191,564,053 in their businesses, and creating or retaining 6,953 jobs.

The Watertown center has a strong relationship with area stakeholders, including its host college, the local banking community, and area economic development agencies in Jefferson, Lewis and Oswego counties. Through its workshops and seminars, the SBDC has met the needs of the business community by providing more information on topics such as marketing, procurement, accounting basics, QuickBooks, internet commerce, and restaurant operations. The SBDC has also partnered with Empire State Development to provide opportunities for small businesses the community to learn more about government contracting, dealing with drug/alcohol problems in the workplace, energy efficiency strategies, and SBA loan programs for special circumstances (such as after natural disasters, September 11, and economic recovery measures).

During the past year, the SBDC, working in conjunction with the New York Farm Viability Institute and Jefferson County Agricultural Development Corporation completed a 2-year project that created “Dairy Profit Teams” on ten select farms from Jefferson and Madison counties. The goal was to use a team approach to help the farmers increase profitability and productivity within this dairy industry. As the Project Administrator, the SBDC provided training, set goals, and achieved success that has sparked a demand for the program across the state.

The major engine in the local economy is the Fort Drum military base, home to the 10th Mountain division (Light Infantry), one of the most highly deployed groups in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The SBDC sponsors a very successful matchmaker event that brings prime contractors, government agencies, and small businesses together to make vital contacts. The SBDC is presently working on converting its Entrepreneurial Training Course and other courses to an online format to better service its clients who are serving or working overseas.

The Watertown SBDC also serves women and youth entrepreneurs. In 2003, the SBDC formed a networking group for women called “The Business of Women,” and has hosted an annual conference that draws 70-100 women from the North Country each year. Participants have had an opportunity to make business contacts and foster relationships while learning about leadership, social media, marketing, life/work balance, and many other topics. Not only does the SBDC staff speak at local high schools and career fairs, but for the past four years, they have joined with Jefferson Community College and economic developers to present an entrepreneurship event and business concept competition to high schools and college students. The event has grown each year increasing in sponsor and monetary prizes for the winning teams.